

The Advance of the Farmer

The farmer of a thousand years ago and the farmer of to day differ widely. The farmer of that time was considered as belonging to the low and ignorant class, who could not boast of their genealogy as the noblemen were so fond of doing. The noblemen spent thier energy in making the farmer subordinate for in this lay their success. An old series of pictures which was reprinted a few years ago well shows the condition of those times. In the first picture was shown the king in his royal robe, the crown upon his head, and the scepter in his hand saying "I rule for all". Next came the soldier in his military coat, bearing his arms with the words "I fight for all." Next came the lawyer, "I plead for all" Then came the bishop "I pray for all." Then there came a long bank half starved farmer taking from his pocket an old wallet "I pay for all." Yes paying for all. the king in his robes, the soldier in his glistening armor, the bishop in his bea-

tifully decorated church, the lawyer with his stern face, and the farmer paying for all. The farmer was looked upon as ignorant and inferior, one from whom money could be drawn to satisfy the desires of others. When the crops were grown the king's share was one tenth, the share of the church was another tenth, and for rent the landlord took from one third to one half and the farmer the produce was left with from three to four tenths of the results of his labor. But this was not all, when the landlord's daughter was to be married, the farmer must bear the expense, and when there was a prospect for war a special tax was issued.

You probably ask why did the farmer allow himself to be so overburdened why did he not break the iron chain that bound him. But what means had he, there he stood ragged and ignorant, no doubt he saw how the nobles revelled in luxury, but what could he do? He must live, one way there was to earn a living, do this or starve. Even under such adverse circumstances the farmer sought for the betterment of his conditions. Reforms

work slowly and so with the farmers improvement. But we find that that he has slowly bettered his conditions and is today among the most advancing class.

The Irishman who expressed himself as "The rich may ride in chaises but the poor must walk," no doubt well expressed the distinguishing difference between the farmer and the nobleman of his time. The old word rural with its original meaning as ignorant, the city being the place of the learned also shows us the condition of those times. But now, the fact that we see the farmer driving swiftly by with his carriage or spring wagon and the word rural no longer meaning ignorant, but country, surely shows an advance.

The farmer of even fifty or one hundred years ago was very simple. The old cart-wagon mould-board was considered a luxury. He gathered his grain by the hand-falls and threshed it with flails, and the gentle winds blew away the chaff. The wife was ever busy spinning and weaving to clothe the family. The boys

who intended not to follow their fathers
 occupation were the only ones sent to school
 To day as the farmer cuts his grain with a
 machine that binds the bundles with
 the nicety of human hands, or as he sits
 on his mower cutting the grass with neat-
 ness and ease, or an engine comes puffing
 along to thrash his grain he sees that he
 must understand their work and use,
 that he may not be as the Brazilian
 who triumphantly walked off with the
 wheelbarrow on his head. As the farmer
 thus sits and ponders, he sees that if he
 wishes to be fair and true to his calling
 he should give as thorough an education
 to the boy who wishes to stay on the farm
 as to the one who wishes to follow some other
 profession, and in order to have schools
 befitting to his calling there should be
 a country high school as well as a city
 high school; and in state institutions
 he can not afford to be unrepresented. Yes
 talent has become a necessity on the farm
 as well as in the work-shop. It took muscle
 to clear the forest to break the prairies, but
 it takes brains to renovate the soil to under-

stand the intricate machinery or plan a years campaign. As a matter of business the farmers education should not be neglected. Who will say that the farmer should not understand the finances of his country? He should understand the evolutions of trade as well as the manufacturer does. For are not his products as liable to the rapacity of rings and corporations as those of any one else, and who will protect him but himself?

The saying "that each man will seek for his own interests" applies as well in politics as in any vocation, and the farmer is beginning to realize these facts. The political demagogue who once drew the votes of farmers by spreadeagle speeches is beginning to fear the farmers votes. He finds his power gradually waning, and he sees that the man of facts and figures, the man of sound argument is being called for. The farmer sees that he must take the stage and expound his views, and that his views are as worthy of consideration as those of any one else.

But this is not enough. If his interests

are to be looked after no one will do it but himself, thus he should be represented in legislature as well as the banker as well as the lawyer as well as the merchant ~~there~~ may be hope to realize that dream of the freeman "No taxation without representation". Though the movement may have contained blunders, it must not be judged by its initial vagaries for have not all political movements had their errors? Rather let us judge the movement by its secondary results, after rashness has abated and truth have survived and errors have fallen. And can we not look upon the farmer with more favor in a condition of revolt than we have looked on him in a condition of political stagnation? Those who tremble over the movement of the industrial class which numbers over half the voters of the nation are surely distrustful of the whole American system of government.

Farmers for a long time seem to have forgotten their social relation to each other, but in the last few years rapid

strides have been made in this direction. The farmer of the past looked with a jealous eye upon his fellows; he considered him as an opponent, one who was merely in the way of progress, one working for his own selfish interest; but he has learned that much advantage may be gained by organization where he can consult not only with his neighbor, but with the farmers of the county of the state. Here he can discuss the true merits of grains stock and machinery. He will not then be so easily overawed by the frauds of agents and brilliant advertisements. Here the experience of one is combined with the experience of others; here can he discuss politics freely without the interference of the political demagogue, and here only will he see his social relation. Many simple truths will thus be learned, much drudgery lightened by spending interesting hours with his fellow workman thus giving him entertainment; and instead of jealousy greatest harmony will exist; and thus check the drift of the farmer to the town.

As we thus note the advance of the farmer and the rapid strides, from the ignorant of a few hundred years ago, and to day find him filling offices of trust in the government, building up institutions of learning for his own benefit, his handling machinery of intricate workmanship, how he is beginning to work in unison with his fellows: we may hope to see the time when the country shall no longer be the place of the ignorant but the place of the learned. When farming shall be one of the noblest occupation one can follow.

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